

The Pony Express: short but proud history

By Joseph T. Liddell
Deseret News staff writer

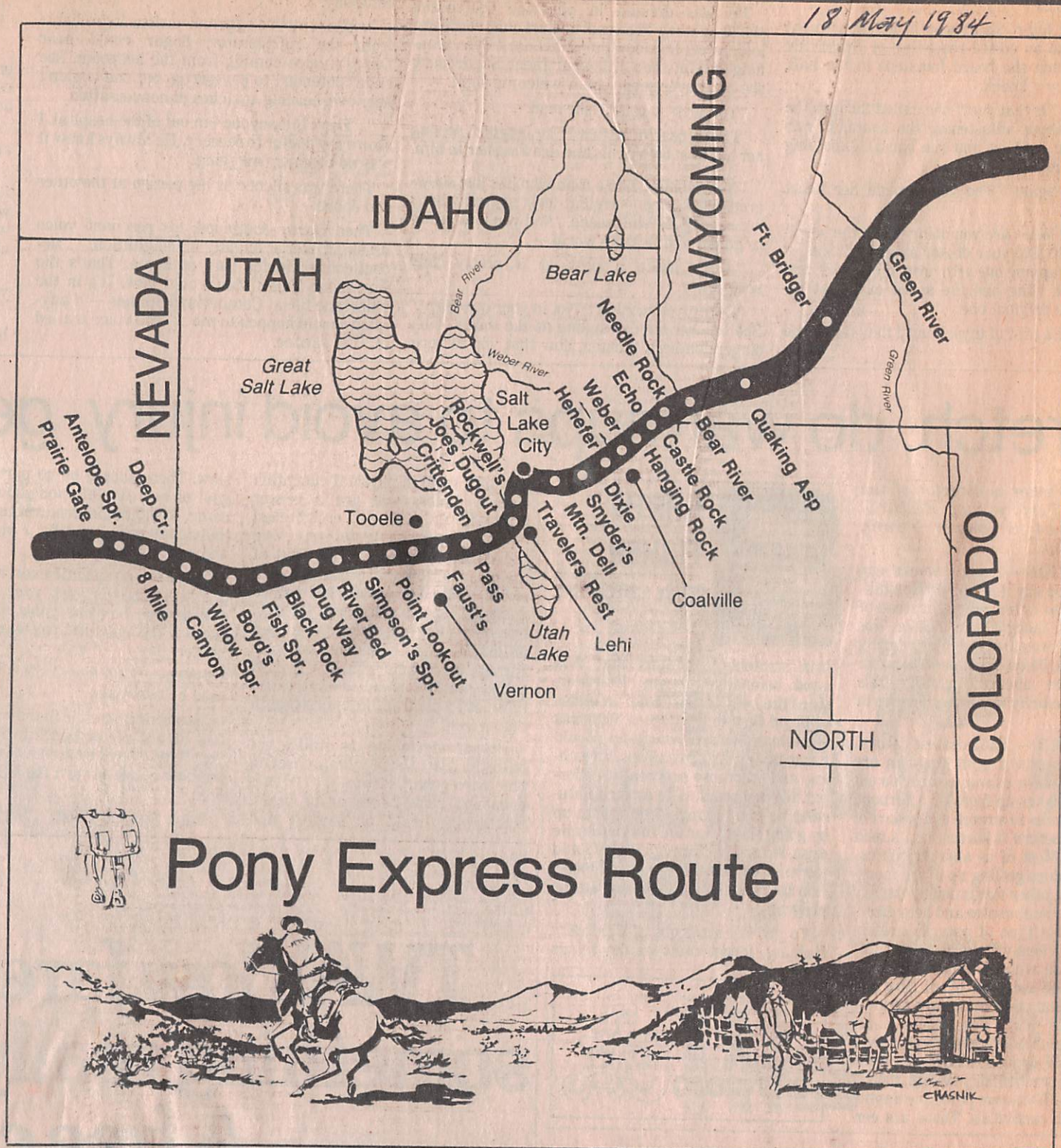
When a remark like, "The Pony Express was faster!" pops up after 120 years, some permanent recognition seems due the long-famed, short-lived courier.

The Pony Express galloped into American history with gusto in 1860 and 18 months later, in 1861, loped off into oblivion, the archives show. Few things have lived on as lively in the memories of succeeding generations of Americans.

The oft-spoken Pony Express promptness remark popped up again in New Jersey not long ago. It occurred in dismay over the three weeks a birthday package mailed from Utah took to reach its East Coast destination.

By comparison, the Pony Express carried mail from Missouri via horsehoofs to California in only eight days in the early 1860s. The ponies raced west and east through Utah regularly. Their speed and their riders' bravery won enduring fame despite their being a slow match with today's jet airmail.

Utahns and Americans aren't the only people fascinated over the frontier-era express system. Even some Europeans find the thoughts of it intriguing. A young Swedish couple rode horseback into Salt Lake City in October 1981. They rode the Pony Express trail throughout, snapping photographs of the prairie's and mountains' beauty, then wrote about it with plans to publish their work later.



week later, Sugar was in her apartment listening to an edited recording of "Nashville" when she heard footsteps in the hall, followed by a knock.

"Cherry? Is that you?" she called through the door, without unfastening the chain. It was the evening and she wasn't expecting visitors.

"Guess again." The voice made her heart

throb. "What are you doing out of the hospital soon? Did your doctor approve?" She let him, wrapping one arm around his waist and holding the sling and the small cast that rested on the original one.

"I made a pest of myself until they threw me

He was dressed in pinstripe seersucker slacks, a navy blue sports shirt and cordovan loafers. As he stood there, his dark eyes scanning the cluttered little apartment, Sugar knew she had never seen such a welcome sight.

"You look so crisp," she said.

"Like a head of lettuce?" he laughed, seizing her hands in both of his and drawing her to him.

"No, you idiot, like a man who has just showered and shaved — well at least shaved what's not bandaged," she teased. "And you look ready to go out and lick the world —"

"— or make a pass at a pretty lady songwriter."

"Darcy, you wouldn't! Not in your condition." She felt her hands tingling at the touch of his fingers on hers. "Listen, now that you're here,

company."

As she removed eggs and various ingredients from the refrigerator, Sugar could hear Darcy's voice coming from the bedroom. She hadn't intended to eavesdrop, but she couldn't help overhearing snatches of conversation.

"... Don't tell anyone I'm out of the hospital. I swore my doctor to secrecy. He always knew it was no ordinary mugging."

There was silence as the person at the other end spoke.

Then Darcy continued, his resonant voice breaking ever so slightly with agitation. "... my confidential folder isn't at home. That's the first place Tojo's men would look. It's in the videotape file at Cumberland Studios — if anything should happen to me ..." The voice trailed off into silence.

A few minutes later Darcy entered the kitchen, showing no sign of agitation over his phone conversation. "So you really can cook," he said, admiring her omelet.

"When I set my mind to it, I can do almost anything," Sugar informed him.

She enjoyed the sight of Darcy balancing a forkful of omelet and eyeing it every inch of the way from plate to mouth. His dark eyes were wide, his raven hair only half brushed, sticking up on one side in a merry tuft.

"In all the excitement, I almost forgot to tell you the news," Darcy said.

"News?" Sugar started. Was it good news or bad?

Stretch, do warmups to avoid injury, get limber

Dr. Fisher is director of the Human Performance Research Center at Brigham Young University.

Several weeks ago,



GARTH FISHER

you used to do in physical education classes. Unless you are a recent graduate or had an enlightened teacher, you probably did stretching (flexibility) exercises at the first of the class period and probably did a

slow. There should be no particular goal of how flexible you should become. It should be done within your individual limits and be a pleasant and relaxing experience.

There are no specific exercises that

position, pull first one leg, then the other to your chest and hold. Then pull both legs together.

Front Leg Stretch. While standing, pull one foot up behind you and hold. Then the other foot.

Coin Stretch. Sit with out knees

The eight states spanned by the old route would find much recreation and tourism value in the preserved trail, enthusiasts say. In Utah, such agencies as the State Parks and Recreation Division, Utah Travel Council, State Historical Society, state and university archivists, civic and private groups favor the Pony Express trail's preservation. The Sons of the Pioneers, Daughters of Utah Pioneers, Ute Rangers and other riding reenactment groups are logical leaders in any trail restoration, lawmakers say.

Backers hoping to preserve the historic Pony Express trail predict congressional adoption of it this year for including in the National Trail System in another year or two. The action would tie together the relatively few relics and remains of the once-astounding horsehoof communication system. An act of Congress financed or created the Pony Express, if only for brief but spectacular stretches.

The Bureau of Land Management already studied the rapid-express trail for the 1976 Bicentennial, says a 1979 Historical Perspective of Utah's Pony Express stations. Monograph 2 of the BLM's cultural resource series. The BLM protects and manages eight Pony Express-Overland Mail Route sites in the state. The two 19th Century trails overlap in many places in Utah, records show. The federal agency provided public interpretation of the trail and camping at points such as Simpson Springs in western Utah. Under BLM guidance, Brigham Young University, Provo, did archaeological excavation in 1974 and 1975 to locate the Simpson Springs station and ruins of other structures there.

Once Congress authorizes the 1984 study, an advisory group and Department of Interior or preservationists will go over the eight-state study. The general public lacks any fulfilling sense of mail gallops in Utah and some other feel of the cross-country dashes of horsemen. However, there is little to give the real end of the 1,966-mile express route. Near the Sacramento terminus on the west when it operated; and at San Rafael, Calif., Mo., the eastern terminus of the Express Pioneer Village at Salt Lake City; St. Joseph, once-spectacular communication system in Pony Express museums memorialize the assure funding of the study. to act on it and send it on to the president to bill 401-14 on May 1. Now, the Senate needs The House resoundingly passed the study many of the 190 prairie, desert and mountain relay stations (two dozen of them in Utah) remain intact or can be salvaged or restored for preservation.